WE CLAIM:

1. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic lock for said safe;

coupling a control unit external to said electronic lock;

receiving signals at said electronic lock from said control unit; and

controlling said safe in response to said signals.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of sending an unlock signal to said electronic lock from said control unit.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of sending an unlock signal comprises sending an unlock signal after receiving a user ID and a PIN.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of encrypting said PIN.

5. The method of claim 3 further comprising a step of saving at least a portion of said signals in an audit database.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of receiving signals at said electronic lock comprises receiving said signals from a remotely located computer.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising a step of sending signals from said electronic lock to said control unit.

8. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving login information at a control unit external to said safe;

enabling a user to select an open door option; and

providing signals from said control unit to said electronic lock in response to the selection of said open door option.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of saving said login information in a database.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open door option comprises displaying an open door option on said control unit.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open door option comprises providing a predetermined location on said control unit for accessing said electronic lock.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein said step of providing a predetermined location comprises providing a secret location on a computer screen.

13. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of enabling a user to select an open door option comprises enabling entry of an override response key.

14. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of receiving login information on said control unit comprises receiving a user ID and a PIN.

15. The method of claim 8 further comprising a step of encrypting at least a portion of said login information.

16. The method of claim 15 further comprising a step of saving said portion of said login information in a database.

17. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a user ID and a PIN at a control unit external to said safe;

enabling a user to select an open door option displayed on said control unit;

encrypting said PIN;

saving said user ID and an encrypted PIN in a database; and

providing an unlock signal from said control unit to said electronic lock in response to the selection of said open door option if said user ID and PIN are valid.

18. A method of controlling a safe, said method comprising the steps of:

providing an electronic lock for said safe;

coupling a control unit externally to an electronic lock;

providing signals from said control unit to said safe;

coupling said signals to said electronic lock; and

unlocking said safe in response to said signals.

19. The method of claim 18 further including a step of receiving login information at said control unit.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said step of receiving login information on said control unit comprises receiving a user ID and a PIN.

21. The method of claim 19 further comprising a step of saving said login information in a database.

22. The method of claim 18 further including a step of displaying an open door option on said control unit.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein said step of displaying a open door option comprises displaying a secret location on a computer display for accessing said electronic lock.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising a step of receiving login information after said secret location is accessed on said computer display.

25. The method of claim 18 wherein said step of providing signals comprises providing an unlock signal to said safe from a remote computer.

26. The method of claim 18 further comprising a step of providing a status of said electronic lock to said control unit.

27. An apparatus for controlling a safe, said apparatus comprising:

an electronic lock incorporated in said safe;

an input/output port coupled to said electronic lock;

a control unit coupled to said input/output port; and

a control signal received at said input/output port from said control unit.

28. The apparatus of claim 27 wherein said control unit comprises a computer.

29. The apparatus of claim 28 wherein said computer comprises a remote computer coupled to said input/output port by way of a communication network.

30. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said remote computer further comprises a communication circuit.

31. The apparatus of claim 29 wherein said remote computer further comprises a memory.

32. The apparatus of claim 31 wherein said memory comprises a database having encrypted PIN information.

33. The apparatus of claim 32 wherein said electronic lock further comprises a communication circuit.

34. A system for controlling a safe, said apparatus comprising:

an electronic lock means for controlling said safe;

an input/output means coupled to said electronic lock means for receiving signals;

a control unit means coupled to said input/output means for providing signals to said electronic lock;

a signal received at said input/output means from said control unit means for controlling said safe; and

a memory coupled to said control unit for storing information received by said control unit in an audit trail database.